



Blackwater Withdrawal Ends Inquiry

By Richard Lardner
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WASHINGTON (AP) — Blackwater USA has ended an inquiry into the private security contractor's performance.

The International Peace Operations Association said in a statement Friday that Blackwater withdrew its application for membership.

Blackwater joined the association in August 2004 and had been "a member in good standing," according to the group.

The Washington-based peace operations association represents security contractors and companies that provide services to the U.S. military and other government agencies.

All member companies are required to follow the group's conduct code, which the group described as a "gold standard" for the industry.

J.J. Messner, the association's director of programs and operations, would not cite a specific episode that prompted the inquiry.

"It would be inappropriate for us to mind read," Messner said.

Blackwater did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Blackwater has a large contract with the State Department to guard U.S. diplomats in Iraq. On Sept. 16, 2007, a Blackwater guard was shot and killed in a Baghdad ambush.

While Blackwater said its personnel were under attack from "armed enemies," Iraqi witnesses and the Ir

Families of Iraqis who were killed sued Blackwater on Thursday, saying the firm violated U.S. law and fo

Federal and congressional investigations are under way to determine what happened in Baghdad. The S

On Friday, Rep. Jan Schakowsky, D-Ill., a Blackwater critic, called on Secretary of State Condoleezza R

"Blackwater employees have a long history of excessive use of force," wrote Schakowsky. She said the